

HOUSE RESOLUTION 235

By Moody

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Representative John William Boyd of Tipton County.

WHEREAS, with the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in February of 1870, African-American men were enfranchised to participate in the democratic process with the right to vote and take part in the affairs of government; and

WHEREAS, fourteen African-American men served in the Tennessee General Assembly during the Reconstruction Era, including John William Boyd of Tipton County, who served during the 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> General Assemblies, 1881-1884; and

WHEREAS, John William Boyd was born enslaved about 1852 in Tipton County to Philip and Sophia Fields Boyd, who were enslaved on the Henry Sanford plantation, having moved with the Sanford family from Orange County, Virginia, to Tennessee in the early days of Tipton County's formation; and

WHEREAS, as a young man, Mr. Boyd worked as a store clerk before applying and being admitted to the Covington Bar Association to practice law in 1870. His exceptional work as a lawyer and as a magistrate quickly gained him a reputation for fairness among county citizens; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Boyd's political career began in 1876, when he served as a delegate to the Republican State Convention held in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was selected to represent Tennessee's Ninth District at the Republican National Convention, which nominated Governor Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio for president; and

WHEREAS, that same year, Mr. Boyd won election to his first six-year term on the Tipton County Court and was subsequently re-elected in 1882 and 1888; he returned to the court in 1897 to fill an unexpired term and won election to his final term in office in 1900; and

WHEREAS, John W. Boyd was elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives in 1881 as a member of the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly and won re-election to the House for the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, at the State Capitol, Representative John Boyd worked persistently with other African-American legislators to overturn Chapter 130 of the Acts of 1875, the first Jim Crow law enacted in the South, which permitted racial discrimination in public facilities; and

WHEREAS, Representative Boyd won the passage of two bills, one authorizing the governor to offer a reward for the arrest of a murderer, and one increasing the exemption from seizure or attachment in the case of debt that sought to protect poor families from undue hardship; and

WHEREAS, in November 1884, he sought election to the Tennessee State Senate to represent Fayette and Tipton counties and lost due to the mysterious theft of the District 4 ballot box, along with at least 400 Republican ballots. He contested the election results in the Senate, which voted to seat his opponent; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 1879, John W. Boyd was joined in holy matrimony with Martha C. "Mattie" Doggett in the Trinity Episcopal Church in Mason, and the couple resided in that community for the rest of their lives; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that we pay tribute to the memory of this esteemed gentleman during Black History Month as his story must be commemorated and shared with the Tennesseans of today and those yet to come; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, that we honor the memory and legacy of Representative John William Boyd of Tipton County as we reflect on his life of service and historic contribution to the State of Tennessee.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.